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ABSTRACT

A research project studied 4 selected matched samples of 160 youths each, aged 16-19 years, from 2 towns in England and 2 in Germany in order to compare the youths' experience of job training and the school-to-work transition. Two expanding towns--Swindon, England, and Paderborn, Germany--were paired, as were Liverpool and Bremen. Whereas Liverpool and Bremen had been experiencing unemployment and economic decline, Swindon and Paderborn had expanding economies. Four career trajectories were constructed for the youths across both countries. The trajectories predicted youths in the following categories: (1) in the academic mainstream leading toward higher education; (2) in training and education leading to skilled employment; (3) in other forms of education and training leading to semiskilled employment; or (4) in unskilled jobs or remedial training schemes or unemployed. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of employment experiences and outcomes of young people in the four towns coupled with local area information enabled contextualized analyses to be given of different types of transition. Some of the findings of the study were that German youths were most likely to be still in school or in job training, since their system had much more stringent requirements for entry-level jobs than did the British system. The study also found that across the four trajectories, British youths were more optimistic than German youths about their prospects for employment and future opportunities, perhaps because their less-structured training made them more self-reliant and less dependent on the continuation of the occupations for which they had trained. (14 references) (KC)

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Regional and Subcultural Determinants of Adolescents' Routes into Occupational Life

An English-German Comparison

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Introduction

In recent years much significance has been attached to the relationship between a country's education and training system and its industrial performance. Arguments that there has been an increasing harmonisation in approaches to training point to change both at the level of policy-making and the similarities in trans-national developments in work organisation, with their consequent effect on the patterning of skills. While both these trends are evident, we believe that for many young people the convergence may be illusory in that the patterns of education, employment and training as experienced may still be sharply different. Indeed this differentiation is clear not only between the operation of national systems in action, but also within them because of the influence of local labour markets. This paper will argue that to focus attention on the convergence at a systemic level runs the risk that the influence of the different cultural traditions and underlying values may be overlooked: that is, elements of systems may look similar but their meaning needs to be contextualised. Additionally such a focus can ignore the variations in the way the system operates in different regions and especially in different economic conditions. A more useful starting point for analysis and comparsion could be to find out more about how education, employment and training are experienced by young people.

How marked is the distinction between skilled work with prospects and other types of work? Is it possible to bridge any divide? How significant is the health of the local labour market in effecting experiences and outcomes for young people? These are some of the questions this paper seeks to address. The weakness of the English system in failing to train in sufficient depth and how this leads to periodic (and/or chronic) shortages of skilled labour has often been stated. In this respect the German dual system has been much lauded. However, although the dual system does dominate German vocational education and training, we argue that the quality of training is much more variable than the monolithic image suggests. In practice, it has different versions and shapes, and in some areas and occupations the pattern of experience and skills acquired leave the young people with fairly bleak prospects. A closer and more critical

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scrutiny of the dual system is required, not only because it is frequently used as a comparator with the English system, but also because it may require a more substantial overhaul on its own account. Before embarking on such an analysis, however, some key features of the local contexts should be summarised.

Areas

Our research adopted the approach of selecting matched samples of 160 16 - 19 year olds from towns twinned on the basis of their contracting or expanding labour markets - Liverpool and Bremen (contracting) and Swindon and Paderborn (expanding). From each town, 160 young people were matched in terms of their career patterns with 160 young people from the twin town.

Each pair of towns had a similar economic history and current industrial mix. All were coping with major economic changes. New technology was a challenge everywhere, but whereas Liverpool and Bremen had been experiencing economic deline for some time with their contracting maritime industries, Swindon and Paderborn had expanding economies that were well stocked with growth businesses. Both Paderborn and Swindon were railway towns in the past and Paderborn still is, but in each place this traditional industry has been overtaken by the growth of new manufacturing and service sector businesses. Swindon has been discribed as one of the fastest growing towns in Europe. After the closure of the railway works in the late 1980s the town soon achieved full employment again and employers had to cope with serious labour shortages. Paderborn appeared to have the greater mismatch problems with adults who were displaced from older industries finding it more difficult to become re-established. However, by the late 1980s the Nixdorf computer company was contributing to the town's transformation into an area of relative economic prosperity.

Bremen and Liverpool were both coping with problems of recession and long-term economic decline throughout the 1980s. Each city is a port, and maritime activities were the basis of their one-time prosperity. Liverpool's decline began early in the 20th century, whereas Bremen remained prosperous until relatively recently, but throughout the 1980s each city was an unemployment blackspot.

Career Trajectories

A guiding principle in our research design was the existence of broadly similar routes to employment in the two countries. The term "career trajectory" reflects the origins of these routes in education and family backgrounds, and the predictability of ultimate destinations in the labour market. As the occupational

structures in both countries are similar, it makes good sense to classify the routes into them in terms of the same broad career trajectories.

Trajectory I:

Academic mainstream leading towards higher education.

Trajectory II.

Training and education leading to skilled employment: dual system in the FRG; work-based training and apprenticeships, or Ruther Education College leading to vocational qualifications in the U. K.

Trajectory III:

Other forms of education and training leading typically to semi-skilled employment.

Trajectory IV:

Early labour market experience of unskilled jobs, experience of "remedial" training schemes, experience of unemployment.

The Samples

In each area, matched samples of 16 - 19 year olds were selected with equal numbers of boys and girls from each of the four career routes in two cohorts. The younger cohort was one year past compulsory full-time education (16 - 17 year olds); the older cohort was two years older (18 - 19 year olds). Across the four towns, a total of 640 young people participated in the study. The research was conducted by postal questionnaires completed in the young peoples homes during 1988 - 1989.

By 1989, the acute shortage of opportunities to gain recongnised vocational training in Bremen seemed to be over. However, young people with low educational qualifications, those from foreign countries and many girls were still being trained in jobs without prospects. They were likely to end up unemployed after training, or in dead-end jobs.

Qualitative and quantitative analysis of employment experiences and outcomes of young people in the four towns coupled with local area information enabled contextualised analyses to be given of different types of transition. The analysis then had a community-based flavour, with a juxtaposition of major policy issues and individual experiences, such that the former are

viewed specifically in terms of individuals and localities (Bynner & Roberts, 1990). This paper concentrates upon the general findings relating to transitions of young people outside the formally skilled routes.

German Transitions

The education and training of young people in Germany is dominated by the Abitur for those following an academic route and the dual system (an apprenticeship comprising firm-based training with corresponding vocational education). Indeed, with the exception of some forms of specialised training, all other formal routes have as an aim to seek to introduce or return young people into an apprenticeship. It is very difficult for those under 19 to operate outside formal of regular, permanent employment for the foreseeable future. There are three distinct routes which young people can follow if they chose not to do, or more likely initially failed to get or did not stay in an apprenticeship. They could follow vocational courses at college, undertake a general provocational course (BGJ) or participate on a scheme (ABM, Arbeiten und Lernen and so on). The success of these routes in (re)integrating young people into the dual system will be critically examined: However, to use this as an indicator of success overlooks the paucity of education and training in some of the less popular apprenticeships. The final sub-section will then examine the extent to which participation in an impoverished apprenticeship leads towards rather than away from a peripheral employment career.

English Transitions

When moving from a consideration of young people's transitions in Germany to England two immediate differences should be signalled. Firstly, the lack of regulation about skilled employment presents a stark contrast to the German approach. The diversity of routes into skilled employment with formal vocational qualifications is coupled with the possibility of reaching de facto skilled status through work experience alone without the necessity of achieving any formal qualifications. The second factor is the much greater significance accorded to local labour market conditions: hence the contrast between the unregulated market-led vocational preparation of Swindon and the array of instituional transitional schemes in Liverpool designed for an intensely hostile labour market environment.

The significance of the local labour market comes not only from the patterning of education, employment and training opportunities, but also in the way it influences the meaning of being on different routes for the young people themselves. This is evident when considering, for example, schemes of

prevocational education. In Swindon, there were a number of examples of these being used as a launchpad into skilled employment, whereas in Liverpool they seldom made much difference to the chance of any, let alone skilled, employment.

In England, the number of youngsters undertaking higher education or skilled employment may raise policy questions about the numbers (in both real und percentage terms) following such routes, but at an individual level their relative scarcity may mean that such youngsters in the English system actually have some comparative advantages. It is below this level, however, that traditionally systemic weaknesses caused by a comparative lack of commitment to education and training really start to become manifest. There has long been a "training gap", whereby far more youngsters in England entered jobs either without any form of training or else such provision as did exist was informal and largely comprised on-the-job training (Finegold und Soskice, 1988).

Although from the perspective of the young people again this lack of regulation may mean that they have a wider range of ways of 'getting on', provided there are sufficient opportunities in the first place. Indeed the possible entry into skilled employment without formal qualifications can provide a powerful incentive for some making an early entry into the labour market (Evans & Brown, 1990). The initial thrust and direction of the National council for Vocational Qualifications has perhaps focuses more on trying to develop a more highly qualified workforce rather than necessarily a more skilled one (CBI 1989, Prais 1989).

In Swindon, the existence of employment opportunities at 16 means that the decision to continue in education is likely to be positive. In contrast, the lack of employment opportunities in Liverpool often meant that the choice was between YTS or staying on at school.

Results

Routes to nowhere?

Youth unemployment was a major problem in the 1980s for both Britain and Germany. Despite the introduction of training schemes, profound imbalances between supply and demand for labour in parts of both countries meant that many young people had great difficulty in gaining any place in ther training systems or workforces. Those trying to survive outside formal education and employment, however, had a number of alternatives. These includes peripheral employment (seasonal or other temporary or casual work), and part-time work. Some who succeeded in gaining regular employment were trapped in

unskilled work with little access to training opportunities. Our samples comprised seven distinguishable groups whose common problem was that their situations seemed to ammount to 'routes to nowhere'. These situations were:

* permanent unskilled employment, with little or no access to training;

* peripheral work, usually with periods of unemployment and/or on remedial schemes;

* remedial schemes;

* domestic careers;

* part-time employment;

* the armed forces;

* long-term unemployment.

The members of these groups did not match one another in the two countries because of fundamental structural differences. Thus, certain groups were almost exclusively German and others exclusively British. In both German samples, most respondents on this trajectory were on some kind of scheme. They had either gone straight into the schemes after leaving school, or had gained some experience of work and unemployment before they were sent onto schemes by the Arbeitsamt (employment office), or had asked to be enrolled. The British samples on this trajectory were on a wider variety of routes to nowhere.

Permanent unskilled employment with little or no access to training

There were only a few examples of German respondents in full-time jobs that did not require any vocational qualifications, and all were from the older cohort. It was practically impossible to opt out of education and training completely in Germany before age 19. The unskilled jobs were mainly in small firms, because larger companies usually provided opportunities for training even if, in practice, these were not always taken up. Hence, this particular sub-group was almost entirely British. And the lack of job opportunities of 16 year-olds in Liverpool meant that only in Swindon unskilled work was a significant option. A small number in the Liverpool sample had, however, managed to obtain unskilled jobs at 16. Many of these jobs had poor prospects, and the pay, conditions and general duties were often not considered very desirable. These young people were hanging on, in some cases rather grimly, because at least thay had jobs.

Peripheral workers

Some respondents had obtained peripheral employment on a seasonal, temporary or casual basis. Examples includes window-cleaning and working on a market stall. Attempts to draw precise boundaries around these jobs were unnecessary, because the young people's careers clearly signalled the attributes of such employment. A peripheral employment career was, perhaps, of greatest significance as a means of economic survival in the depressed labour markets of Liverpool and Bremen.

Young people in Swindon had more opportunity to obtain peripheral work, and the availability of such jobs meant that few had been unemployed continously for long spells. The existence of temporary or seasonal work usually offered some respite. But, although this could break up long-term unemployment, it rarely offered a route into more stable jobs. Thus, when a trainee paint-sprayer was made redundant during his first year at work, this was followed in the next three years by four spells of unemployment, interspersed with three periods in full-time employment. None of these were core jobs, and while the spells of unemployment might not have constituted a major problem in themselves, this represented a 'drift' where the young person, once out of regular employment, was finding it difficult to effect a return. Indeed, the development of a poor employment record could itself operate as a powerful barrier to gaining permanent employment. This was poignantly expressed by another Swindon respondent, who had applied for numerous jobs and held moderate job hopes of becoming a warehouse worker, but had found that 'once employers know my unemployment record they don't want to know any more about me'. However, the Swindon labour market was open and strong enough to allow speedy recovery for some who lost their jobs or were made redundant. After initial instability, being sacked, then made redundant, and following a short spell of unemployment, one Swindon respondent had become a central records administrator with a large car fleet management company. The decisive factors here were probably the individual's educational attainment (0-levels) and that the spell of unemployment was brief. Two other Swindon cases had each spent two years in post-compulsory education, one retaking 0-levels, the other a low level commercial qualification. The former then became unemployed for a spell, found a job, but was made redundant, then found another job as an office junior in a firm of solicitors. The second also had a spell of unemployment before setting in a job as a garage forecourt cashier.

As time spent unemployed lengthened, so a shift seemed to occur from being regarded as the victim of misfortune such as redundancy.

Remedial schemes

In Britain, the schemes which were most likely to undertake basic skills education were non-technical, non-firm-bases YTS. However, the prime emphasis on these schemes was training. In some cases, this was little more than a convenient fiction, but Swindon and Liverpool did not possess a clear remedial educational route. This sub-category, therefore, is exclusively German.

In Bremen and Paderborn, young people who failed to reach the school-leaving certificate standard had to remain in full-time education. An additional year could then be spent at the Hauptschule or on a remedial scheme. Thus, two Paderborn respondents had left Hauptschule without the school-leaving certificate and had enrolled on a vocational preparation scheme where they could earn the required certificate. In addition, they hoped that this would increase their chances of apprenticeships. However, even some who left secondary education with leaving certificates had chosen to enter the vocational preparation scheme, which was largely remedial in character. These choices were usually made after failure to get apprenticeships. Also, as we saw in the preceding section, some young people could end up on schemes after dropping out of apprenticeships.

The schemes were attempting to provide a grounding in specific vocational skills as well as teaching literacy, numeracy and job-finding, including filling in application forms. The essentially remedial character of all of them arose from the fact that the skills were being developed to increase, the young people's chances of entering the dual system. Occasionally, in some occupational areas such as clerical, young people with higher school-leaving certificates enrolled on such schemes. Thus, in Bremen three individuals joined an ABM (Arbeitsbeschaffungsmaßnahme = job creation programmes) scheme with certificates from Realschule or Handelsschule. Once again, however, this was after failing to gain apprenticeships. Another young person had started, but had not completed, Handelsschule and she too ended up on the scheme. Both towns had ABM schemes. These sought to integrate the teaching of basic and vocational skills. Young people could obtain experience of work in practical trades, such as metalwork, woodwork, painting and upholstery.

Domestic careers

All the towns' samples included individuals either following, or soon intending to embark on, domestic careers comprising childcare and housework, sometimes in combination with paid employment. One domestic avenue was looking after other people's children. This seemed to exert some appeal in all towns. In

Bremen, one of the younger cohort females was on a scheme (clerical branch) and expected to be in non-firm-based training in a year's time, but subsequently wanted to be a childminder. In both British towns, some young mothers who were not working would have liked to be childminders as a means of combining their own domestic responsibilities with earning money. In Swindon, one of the younger cohort had been unemployed for nine months, but was working three days a week as a childminder at the time of our survey, though longer term she wanted to be a photographer. Another Swindon respondent was working fulltime as a nanny.

Significant domestic responsibilities, even parenthood at a very young age, did not automatically put a respondent into trajectory IV. In practice, however, if having a baby took a young woman out of the labour market for any significant length of time, it could become difficult to get any job in Liverpool, or anything other than trajectory IV-type employment in Swindon. In the latter town, a couple of younger cohort mothers were looking after their children without any immediate intention of seeking work. Both had been unemployed for months before the birth of their children. Similarly, in the older cohort, two young mothers had spent most of the last two years looking after their children. One had previously been unemployed, but hoped within a year to have taken up some part-time work. The other had been on the YTS prior to the birth of her daughter, and had occasionally undertaken some part-time work, even though domestic responsibilities had subsequently predominated. She expected to be in full-time work within the next year, probably as a warehous worker. The opportunities for factory and retail employment, both full- and part-time, guaranteed that in Swindon return to employment following a domestic career would be easy to effect. Mini-shifts, including twilihgt ones, were run with the explicit intention of recruiting women with domestic responsibilities. However, as one Swindon female indicated, choice could be nominal, because of financial constraints. She had a young baby and did some part-time work in a shop, although ideally she would have liked a full-time job. Jobs in Swindon were not all that hard to find but

> 'I have a baby, and if I get a job it is normally very low pay, so it is not worth me working after I have paid for a childminder. I would also lose my social benefits. Or the job would be on shifts or hours that wouldn't suit me. I think there should be more to help young mothers (jobwise).'.

None of the young mothers in any of the samples had stable skilled employment. Those with employment experience had, without exception, been doing either temporary or unskilled work. There was no evidence of domestic responsibilities interrupting progress to higher trajectories, but rather of young motherhood's association with already being on a lower trajectory.

Part-time employment

In Britain, part-time employment has been mainly the preserve of married women (Ashton and Maguire, 1983). We saw in the previous section that some young mothers undertook, or were looking for, part-time work. The explosion of part-time employment in the 1980s let to some school-leavers taking such jobs after failing to obtain full-time employment. However, the take-up was less than might have been expected, partly because employers refused even to consider 16 - 17 year-olds for many part-time jobs (Roberts et al., 1987). In our study, just four respondents in the British samples held part-time jobs: cleaning hospital wards, working as a barmaid, sales assistant in a do-it-yourself store, and in a kitchen making pub lunches. Such part-time work was mostly a matter of expediency in the absence of full-time employment in Liverpool, whereas in Swindon it was more likely to have been from choice. The cases of part-time employment in Swindon consisted of one female who worked three days per week as a childminder, and trhee others who coupled part-time work with bringing up their own children. Dale (1989) has argued that one reason why employers prefer to employ part-time those who have another source of income, such as women with working husbands, is in recognition that the work is usually unskilled, poorly paid and with few or no prospects.

In Germany, no-one in either town was engaged in part-time work as their most significant activity. The usual expectation about being in ducation or training acted to bar the young people from part-time jobs, alongside study.

The armed forces

Britain abandoned conscription at the end of the 1950s, but in Germany, at the time of our research, all adult males still had to perform national service in the armed forces, or alternative service in the community. It was also possible for young people in both countries to join the regular armed services, but only a handful in our samples were choosing this without first achieving vocational or higher education qualifications. As with those engaged in domestic careers, in Britain there was no prima facie reason why joining the armed forces could not be part of a higher trajectory career. Indeed, one trajectory I respondent in Swindon wanted to join the Royal Navy, while one from Liverpool, currently studying at university, aimed to become an army officer.

The long-term unemployed

There was no-one in this sub-group in either German sample. This does not, of course, mean that long-term unemployment was not a problem in Paderborn and Bremen, but that the problem could not become manifest so early in a career. However, British samples included individuals who had already been unemployed for lengthy periods. In Swindon, they had all at some stage held jobs and, as such, were really peripheral workers. In contrast, 17 of the trajectory IV sample in Liverpool could measure their time unemployed in years rather than months.

The corrosive effects of long-term unemployment are well documented (Warr, 1983; Spruit, 1983; Stokes and Cochrane, 1984; Laurance, 1986), and the particular problems faced by young people have been highlighted elsewhere (Warr et. al., 1982). In a severely depressed labour market like Liverpool, it was difficult for anyone to fail to notice the widespread impact of unemployment. The effects on their families, friends and others in the community were often acknowledged by young people on other trajectories.

> 'Most of my family are unemployed. Only myself and one of my brothers have jobs. There are five of us. I, and all the rest of my family, are sick of having no money to spend. Sometimes I can go out with my mates, but we can't go out often. We're all in the same boat ...

Another Liverpool respondent considered urgent action was required to stop 'a hard-set limbo generation from going down the road to oblivion'. Others thought that 'people aged 16 - 17 are going through depression and are having a hard time now', and that 'having experienced work down south I have no doubt in my mind that we are living worlds apart in terms of wealth and employment'.

A couple of Liverpool young people in trajectory IV highlighted the extent to which they felt neglected or abused by others, especially government and employers.

> 'They may one day realise that we are real people and not just, in some cases, voters. I wonder if the German government takes much notice of their young people.'

> 'I believe that nowadays employers are not prepared to give young people a chance. Every time you apply for a job all they ever ask is, 'have you had experience?' But how can young people like myself gain the experience if they are not willing to teach us? With this government, young people are automatically expected to take a YTS whether or not they want to. They get bad pay and gain nothing at the end, only the idea of getting used to a low wage because, unless they are among the lucky ones, that is all there is for them under this government.'

These two articulate older cohort respondents were both engaged in strategies which could eventually lift them out of long-term unemployment. One was reluctantly thinking of joining the army, while the other was attending evening classes and adding to her stock of GCSEs and O-levels: she already had five, hoped to become a nurse and, given the shortfall projected for nurses in the 1990s, which led to the exclusion of young people under 18 from eligibility for social security and subsequently compelled them to join the YTS, may mean that it will be difficult in future for so many young people to build such unrelievedly dismal records as in our two Liverpool cohorts. However, whether time spent in warehousing schemes would have led to any improvement in their prospects is debatable.

Summary

In Germany, it is very unlikely that those under 19 will be officially performing unskilled work. Indeed, it is still more likely that those carrying out a wide range of unskilled tasks do so under the guise of 'skilled training', so that they are actually designated unskilled workers. Even in such cases, however, youngsters would still be attending Berufsschule and hence have some access to education and training. Permanent unskilled employment is then, both in law and in practice, an adult career. Indeed, follow-up of older cohort youngsters on schemes in Paderborn showed that some hat subsequently settled into unskilled jobs.

In Britain, the state of the labour market determins whether there are unskilled jobs for young people to get. There were very few such opportunities in Liverpool but, in a buoyant labour market such as Swindon, there were not only opportunities, but also plenty of youngsters willing to take them.

The continued existence (or resurgence) of such jobs raises the spectre of the classic pre-1970s' problems of young people being recruited into 'jobs without training' or prospects, when the demographic changes mean labour, especially youth labour, is relatively scarce. Another significant factor about unskilled work is the way it reflects a labour market segmentation by gender. Many unskilled jobs in Swindon were widely perceived as 'women's work'.

Where young people did not get, or could not keep, a permanent job, what were the possibilities that they could build a career as a peripheral worker, changing between jobs, picking up temporary or seasonal work if necessary? Alternatively, could they break up unemployment with spells of such work? In depressed labour markets there were few such opportunities, and when schemes ended, in either country, prospects were often bleak. By contrast, the more buoyant labour markets were much more forgiving. Thus youngsters were frequently able to recover

speedily from being made redundant or getting the sack, and if necessary, they could 'fill in' with temporary or seasonal work. Indeed, virtually the only barrier to a return to permanent employment in a boom economy like Swindon was if a young person was unemployed for a lengthly period; employers tended to shy away from those with 'poor' employment records, even if they were short of labour.

In Germany, the dominance of the dual system is such that, in practice, time spent on 'remedial schemes' will be much more likely to lead so unskilled jobs on the periphery of the employment structure. There is very little chance of making a full recovery into skilled employment. In both countries, the traditional gendered responses to labour market difficulties were taken by some of our respondents: domestic careers and joining the armed forces. In neither case was this the exclusive province of youngsters in this trajectory, but they were more likely to view it as a 'way out' of an otherwise bleak future. In Britain, jobs such as childminding are examples of peripheral employment, being open to those with or without formal qualifications. In Germany, formal training for such work is much more likely (for example, there were a number of apprentice housekeepers in the sample), but there are few job opportunities and those that do exist are often low paid and lacking in long-term prospects. Another aspect of 'domestic careers' was trying to combine domestic responsibilities with some paid work. Once again, the buoyant Swindon labour market made such options ralistic, although the type of mainly part-time opportunities was again firmly characterised as 'women's work', with labour market segmentation in the form of a secondary labour market clearly in evidence.

Future plans

To assess their longer-term plans and expectations, the young people were asked whether they thought themselves likely to become self-employed, gain additional qualifications, train for different jobs, move to different areas or countries, or learn a foreign language. The possible answers ranged from 1 (very likely) to 5 (no chance).

Expecting to become self-employed was associated with being on trajectory I, which reflects the fact that many traditionally self-employed professions require academic training. Differences between the towns were slight, but there was a very obvious sex difference: in all four cities males were almost twice as likely as females to expect to become self-employed.

Trajectory was also the best predictor of whether individuals expected to obtain additional qualifications. There was an almost linear decline from trajectory I to trajectory IV. Those with positive experiences in education, who could expect that additional efforts would pay off, were the most motivated to

qualify further: Here the Swindon sample displayed the most extreme contrast between trajectories, possibly because the career prospects for those willing to qualify were excellent in Swindon, but those without academic achievements would also be confident that they would be able to earn their livings without gaining further qualifications. In both countries, men were more likely than women to intend to gain further qualifications.

The British respondents were more likely to expect to train for different jobs than the Germans. This was probably because it was taking longer in Germany to qualify initially, and the significance of having a Beruf (trade, profession) in Germany is stronger than in Britain. It is also possible that the discontrinuous or disappointing job experiences of the British samples had strengthened their desire to do something different.

Expecting to move to another area or to another country was almost entirely a question of being on trajectory I in both countries. University-bound young people probably knew that regional mobility would be necessary for good career prospects and, given their educational advantages, were probably more willing than other young people to expose themselves to new experiences.

Expecting to learn a foreign language was also strongly related to being on trajectory I. Here there was also a clear national difference: the German respondents were twice as likely as the British respondents to expect to learn a foreign language.

A further set of questions assessed respondents' confidence in their occupational futures. The samples were presented with the following statements, and asked whether they agreed or disagreed with them.

* in 10 years' time I will have the kind ob job that I really want;

* I will be able to impress an employer in a job interview;

* I will be able to get on with the people I work with;

* I will avoid unemployment;

* I will never be dismissed from a job for unsatisfactory work.

We expected that trajectory would be related to the respondents' self-confidence, and this proved to be the case. When asked whether they were sure about having the jobs they really wanted in 10 years, four-fifths in trajectory I answered positively, but only two-thirds in trajectory IV. Confidence that they would not become unemployed was shared by nearly three-quarters in trajectories I and II, two-thirds in trajectory III, and half in trajectory IV. Four-fifths of trajectory I respondents were convinced that they would not lose their jobs because of poor performance, though more than two-thirds in trajectory IV also shared this belief.

The influence of trajectory was less evident for the other opinions. Confidence in being able to impress an employer in an interview was slightly more common in trajectory I, while the feeling of being able to get along with colleagues was also almost equally prevalent across all four trajectories. Towns and national contexts turned out to be more important. Surprisingly, the Liverpool respondents were the most strongly convinced that they would have the kinds of jobs they wanted in the future, followed by Swindon, Bremen and Paderborn. Belief in being able to impress an employer followed this pattern.

Swindon held the lead concerning the respondents' belief in being able to avoid unemployment (table 5), which is not surprising, given the city's economic situation. More unexpected was the four-fifths of the Liverpool sample who felt certain that they would not become unemployed. In contrast more than half of the Bremen sample, and two-thirds of Paderborn respondents, felt unsure or doubtful about their future employment chances.

Attitudes to work and plans for the future add another slant to the Anglo-German differences we found in vocational preparation and experience. The belief the British young people had in their work skills carried over into optimision about future prospects. More Germans, on their longer training routes, were uncertain about them.

'Enterprise' values, such as 'using initiative' and taking responsibility, came at the bottom of the rankings of desirable job attributes in both countries; friendly atmosphere, career security and high wages came top. The british young people were more likely than the Germans to believe that it was important to hang onto a job even if you did not like it. More young people subscribed to these beliefs in the bottom than the top trajectories.

Another indication of the extended transition to employment in Germany was that most of the young people there expected to be still training in a year's time, whereas most of the British expected to be in a job. More British young people expected to train for new jobs in the future and to leave their home town at some time in the future. More of the Germans expected to learn a foreign language and more of them were satisfied with the education and training they had received.

The picture that emerges is of most young Germans on well-established an extended training routes, leading to well-defined occupational identies, but uncertainly whether the economy would enable them to practise what they had been trained to do. In contrast, the British, with their less clearly-defined vocational preparation and more opportunistic approach to employment, had more confidence in their futures even though, in the economically most depressed areas, prospects, especially for those on the lowest trajectories, were least assured.

Conlusions

Our research has exposed fundamental differences in the assumptions lying behind the transition to employment in Britain and the FRG, which are reflected in the experiences and responses of young people. In the FRG, "vocationaslism" is in full flower; it is taken for granted that all young people, whatever the form of employment, must be qualified to enter it. The period of preparation varies from the several years prior to graduation from a German university to the three years for the traditional apprenticeship. In England, the persistent assumption of a large proportion of employers, young people and their families is that getting a good job in the minimum possible time is what matters. Even in higher education, graduation generally occurs by age 22 and attempts to extend university courses, such as the four year degree offered at Keele University, have not caught on elsewhere. Espite all the initiatives and exhortations by government and business representatives, training as a preliminary to employment has still not penetrated very deeply into the British psyhe. The prevailing view still seems to be that whatever you need to know in a job can be taught on the job itself; getting the job is what matters.

To try to draw up a comparative balance sheet of the strengths and weaknesses of the two countries' education and training systems and then to make a judgement about the superiority of one over the other would be invidious. Each type of vocational preparation is a coherent process which can form a clear, and probably for most young people, satisfactory route to adult employment. There is probably no esay way by which a British version of the dual system, could be established in Britain espite the Confederation of British Industry's recently expressed hopes. Nevertheless, our research has revealed problems which need tackling in each of the systems.

The German youth who succeeds in getting an apprenticeship in a labour market where the skills are in strong demand probably has the better all-round preparation for entry to work and adulthood. This ist because the mixture of education and training leading to clearly-defined vocational qualifications ensures a degree of breadth in the training experience. For those learning outmoded skills in declining occupations in areas of high unemployment, or those who fail to gain entry to training in the first place, the prospects can be bleak. In Englang, the far less stringent criteria for entry into jobs means that in a boom economy experience of employment is far easier to get. But while job-related training may equip the young person very well to meet the requirements of a particular employer it may be less suited to the changes in employment that economic transformation brings. In times of slump, this can relegate young adults to a pool of undertrained and uneducated labour, ill-equipped to enter the new industries on which the regeneration of the economy depends.

What is the explanation for the (probably) unrealistic optimism of the Liverpudlians and the (relative) pessimism of the Paderborn respondents? Was earlier work experience providing the British samples with some adult self-confidence that the Germans lacked? Were regional characteristics overcoming local labour market influences (the 'Merseyside spirit') the crisis of the Nixdorf computer company in Paderborn in 1988, for example, were the young people in Bremen and Paderborn less optimistic because their labour market entry was being delayed by longer periods in training, a situation which did not force them to display the Zweckoptimismus ('compensatory optimism) which might be presumed in Liverpool? It is notable that, in all the cities, 'occupational self-confidence' was lowest in trajectories III and IV, reflecting the more precatious employment prospects of the young people there, but these differences were smaller than the cross-national ones.

The lessons to be learned concern principally those young people in each of our trajectories for whom the present training system was clearly failing. For the FRG, a key question is how to build in more flexibility and extendes opportunities to gain work experience, qualifications and skilled work itself, especially in areas of high unemployment. For Britain, the question is how to regulate more effectively, but without destoying, existing routes into and through training, thereby making employers more responsive, and jobs more educative. Both countries may need to look hard again at current discontinuities in their curricula between 11 and 18. Many successful industrial nations maintain a broader mix of academic and pre-vocational education for longer, and put off employer-based training to later. Both the FRG and the UK need to consider this approach as well.

Our research was about young people's experience during the early stages of the transition to employment. We hope that the next phase will investigate the experience of work itself, as part of a broader study of adjustment to adulthood in the two countries. The intention is to follow up selected young people from our samples together with their employers and other key people in their lives. This will enable us to relate the individual's current perfomance in jobs and their attitudes to the preceding vocational preparation. We expect that, again, our research will not lead to a straight forward judgement that one country's system is superior to the other's. Each has its own coherence matching past assumptions, experience and needs. We conclude that the best way forward for each country will be to develop within its own established training cultures, to build upon its existing strengths and to work with its historical grain.

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